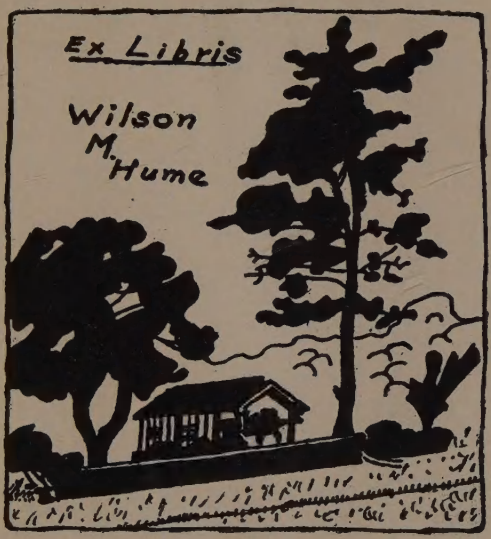
School of Theology at Claremont
1001 1336405
BP
166.2
G3

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

From the library of
Wilson M. Hume


Ex Libris
Wilson
M.
Hume

The Islam Series

GENERAL EDITOR

The Rev. Canon Sell, D.D., M.R.A.S.

THE MUSLIM IDEA OF GOD

THE MUSLIM IDEA OF GOD

BP
166.2
G3

BY

THE REV. W. H. T. GAIRDNER, B.A.

THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY
LONDON, MADRAS AND COLOMBO

PRINTED AT THE
S. P. C. K. PRESS, VEPERY MADRAS
1909

LC to 62-

PREFACE

WE wish our friend the reader clearly to understand that the characters of this dialogue, and the dialogue itself, are entirely imaginary, however much they may have been suggested by real persons and real conversations. The author has thrown his ideas into dialogue form simply to increase the human interest of the subject. Theology is not a matter of books, but of souls.

The same characters are found in two former dialogues, both published in English, namely, '*What happened before the Hijra*', and '*Inspiration*'. In the former of these the idea that the New Testament (Injíl) of to-day is a corrupted book is disposed of by a very careful citation of historical proofs. In the latter the Christian and Muslim views on inspiration, as based upon their respective books, are compared and contrasted; and Christ as the incarnate Word of God is shown to be the last word of God to

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

man, fulfilling the human craving for an eternal principle of self-revelation in God, a craving which Islám has shown it is conscious of in its doctrine of the eternity of the Qur'án.

The former dialogue has been published at Cairo and may be obtained by applying to the publishers of the present volume. The latter has been published by the Christian Literature Society, Madras.

May God bring us all to that view of His blessed nature and attributes in which we may find eternal salvation, and by which we may truly glorify His Name.

THE MUSLIM IDEA OF GOD

I—THE MUSLIM IDEA STATED AND CRITICIZED

THE proceedings of the Discussion Society which had been formed by some earnest-minded youths in Cairo for the discussion of religious subjects increased in interest as time went on.

The subject of inspiration[1] had already been discussed, and a new subject had been propounded: 'The Muslim and Christian ideas of God'. The Society had agreed to discuss the Muslim idea first. But before it met, two new members had been added to its roll, the first a Christian who had become a Muslim, named Ḥasan Effendi 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ, and the other a Muslim who had become a Christian, named Touma Effendi 'Abdu'l-Masíḥ. Both were very well-educated men, and no suspicion attached to either of having embraced another faith from base motives. The latter had taken the name of Touma (Thomas) because he had only won his new faith after many strivings and not a little

[1] *Inspiration*, by W. H. T. Gairdner. Christian Literature Society, Madras.

darkness and doubt. The Committee had acquainted them with the subject fixed for discussion, and had also asked them to take a leading part in it, which they had promised to do.

When order was called, the President intimated the subject: 'Differences between Muslim and Christian conceptions of God'; and added: 'Above all things, sirs, I trust that this question will not be debated in any sophistical spirit, or that any speaker will allow himself to try simply for a cheap dialectical victory over a silenced adversary. I know well that it is exceedingly difficult to avoid this spirit in religious controversy, but nevertheless we must try to do so. Our customs and beliefs forbid us, it is true, to join in spoken worship together, but I think the tone of our discussion would greatly gain in seriousness and genuineness if we all stood a moment in silent prayer, each one addressing the Almighty according to his own custom.'

They did so, and then Ḥasan 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ spoke (in substance) as follows:—

The great attraction of Islámic theology to me is its extreme simplicity. What strikes me about the Christian and other creeds is their complexity, and the difficulty of comprehending them. But the Muḥammadan creed commends itself to the simplest intellect: 'There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is the prophet of God.' Further, when you study Muḥammadan theology more

deeply, though you find ample that taxes your powers of thinking, you do not find anything that contradicts reason. All is rational, logical, simple. I do not wish to insult any opponent, but I must say that I doubt whether any criticism has ever been made, or will ever be made, against the philosophy of the creed of Islám. I equally doubt as to whether Christianity is capable of philosophic defence. If I am wrong on these two points, I sincerely wish to be enlightened.

I shall not, therefore, make a long speech on the outlines of the Muslim's idea of God, as I imagine it to be well known to all here. I should prefer rather to indicate the chief heads, and invite criticism upon each. We shall in this way gain a clearer view of the unassailable strength of the Islámic view, and we shall also give the best possible opportunity to our Christian friends for making clear their own.

We say, then, that the world, as a system of causes, and effects, must have had a first cause; for it is impossible to conceive of a chain of causes and effects, each of which conditions the other, running back *ad infinitum*. They must obviously go back to a first cause, or cause of causes, which equally obviously is unconditioned; for if it were conditioned it would be no better than the causes and effects already mentioned; it would be in fact an effect, and we should still be without the originating cause.

This first cause, absolutely unconditioned, absolutely unaffected or unaffectable by any external cause, absolutely transcendent above all events in time and space, absolutely self-sufficient, we call God.

TOUMA.—Excuse me just one moment.—Why is that first cause called by that name? Is it self-evident, or deducible by reason?

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—No, revelation taught that this is His name. I am coming to that presently, and will say here, *en passant*, that most of these points in Muslim theology are self-evident, and can be proved by a deductive process resembling mathematics; though it does not follow that every intellect has been active or bold enough to do so —quite the contrary. The function of revelation is, first of all, to confirm authoritatively the intuitions and deductions of the reason; and secondly, to give knowledge of truths not so intuitive or deducible, such as the future life.

Continuing, then, I would say that the deductive reason further clearly asserts that this first cause, or God, is *one* (I need not stop to argue the point); also that He is infinite in knowledge —He is all-wise: that He has will; and that He is infinite in power—He is almighty. The best proof of these things is to try to conceive the reverse and see the hopeless contradictions in which you are at once landed.

Unity, knowledge, will, power, here are four

out of the seven essential attributes of God at once and easily deducible by reason, and confirmed by revelation. The other three are themselves aspects of revelation, and are therefore not deducible by pure reason, but given by revelation to the sinless prophets sent by God into the world to teach men, namely, that He sees, that He hears, that He speaks. I, of course, cannot convince any opponent by an appeal to the Qur'án which he does not accept, or to Muḥammad in whom he does not believe, but I content myself with pointing out that these last three attributes—of hearing, of seeing, and of speaking—are not repugnant to reason; on the contrary it would be strange if an all-knowing God did not hear or see, and did not convey to His creatures intelligence about Himself, which is what we mean when we say 'He speaks'.

Here, then, I pause; for Islámic theology rests on these seven attributes as on seven pillars. There are indeed ninety-nine names of God, collected from the Qur'án, and these names are of course attributes; but they will all be found latent in these seven primary and essential ones. As for the portion of Muslim theology which concerns the future life and religious duties in this life, that is a separate section, given by revelation, and is not related to the subject before us, namely, the nature of God as such. Such

are the leading ideas of Muslim theology. They will be found to be a complete economy of faith, avoiding exaggeration and extravagance of every kind, in particular the confusing Christian disfiguration of pure monotheism, which finds plurality in the Godhead, and which attributes to the Creator subordination to conditions, and imputes to Him all manner of weakness, insufficiency and incompleteness. Against all such ideas, the Muslim Alláh is utterly contrasted; he is the Absolute, the Unconditioned, the Not-responsible to man, the Irresistible in will and power, the Unbegotten and Unbegetting, the All-sufficient, who needs neither the world nor the men whom He has created. Praise be to His name! there is no god but He!

[As the speaker paused, many members could not refrain from a deep murmur of approval and witness to the oneness and majesty of God, which sounded round the room like the low rumble of distant thunder.]

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ (continuing).—And now I should like to hear any comments or criticisms on these ideas, though to my own mind they only have to be stated to be accepted wholly and completely.

Touma.—It is curious that to most of what you assert I can perfectly well assent. In fact barring what you said about Christian ideas I accept your statement.

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—Why then did you leave Islám?

TOUMA.—There is almost only one sentence I take exception to, namely, that in Islám is found a complete economy of faith. That is just where I have found it to fail. It is one-sided. It sees clearly one side of truth, and exaggerates that aspect so much that it is compelled to deny the other side, with results that are inevitably unfortunate.

Generally speaking, then, I welcome the glorious truths which Islám emphasizes, and I admire the vivid consciousness of God which, in its best days, gave it strength to win its way to both ends of the then-known world. . . .

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—We are much obliged!

TOUMA.—I speak in perfect sincerity. But having said this, I further feel that: (1) the unmitigated assertion of this one side of truth leads logically to blank agnosticism; (2) there are elements in Islám itself which contradict this one-sided assertion of God's absolute transcendence, and which, when developed by reflection, lead to Christianity.

SHAIKH ḤUSAIN.—The Mu'tazilas and Ṣúfís have already gone over all your ground. It has all been discussed, and Islám remains exactly where it did.

TOUMA.—It is possible that the much-abused Mu'tazilas, who form such a butt in your books

on theology, had a glimpse of the right track; yes, and the Ṣúfís too. I should hesitate in condemning wholesale the efforts of such earnest thinkers. Islám may perchance only have injured herself in not trying to assimilate the truth they were struggling to express.

AL-HINDI.—Well, our excellent Mu'tazila, let us hear whatever heresies you have to show us. I have a fellow-feeling for you, as the Sháikh Ḥusain here once called me the Prince of the Mu'tazilas!

ḤUSAIN.—I wish you were no worse!

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—You have made a most serious statement, my good friend, and one which I never remember hearing before, namely, that Muslim theology properly leads to pure agnosticism, and that where it does not it leads to Christianity.

SHAIKH ḤUSAIN.—It is insulting in the extreme! It . . .

BULUS.—Patience, Light of the Azhár! How many times have you said to me that 'Christianity leads to polytheism, and that where it does not it leads to Islám'? I fail to see any difference between the severity of the two assertions!

SHAIKH ḤUSAIN (laughing in spite of himself).—Yes, but what I said is right, and what Touma Effendi has said is wrong!

TOUMA.—Here, my dear friend, you amusingly beg the question. The fact is, confess now, you

like very much saying hard things about Christianity, which you are not willing even to listen to in the case of Islám!

SHAIKH ḤUSAIN.—Ma'laish!

TOUMA.—What I said is the result of five years' reflection, and of course I am ready to give my reasons. I wish to say at once, however, that theological reasons of a merely intellectual character would not have made me change my faith. There were other reasons . . .

A MEMBER (sarcastically). Quite so! many others . . . !

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—(with indignation). Shame, sir! Whoever insults Touma Effendi's sincerity insults mine. You should withdraw your base insinuation. (The member withdraws his remark).

TOUMA.—I meant, of course, that there were also moral reasons that made me prefer Christianity, together with something little less than a revelation to my own soul from God. I merely say this in order that we may not give too much weight to the intellectual aspect of the theology which we are about to discuss. Intellectual satisfaction must, of course, follow moral and spiritual satisfaction, but these last ought to be first in order of importance. I shall try, therefore, to show that there is a connexion between our theology and our morals, and that the theological superiority which I find in Christianity is connected with a moral one also.

THE PRESIDENT.—'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ Effendi invited criticism, and he must not be put out if, as it seems, he is going to get it. How then, sir, do you make out that Muslim theology leads to agnosticism?

TOUMA.—Because of its exaggeration of the doctrine of absolute transcendence (tanzíh). In its anxiety to give God an absolute transcendence over all conditioned things you separate Him so entirely from the universe that I do not see how you conceive of Him at all, or as in any way connected with it, or joined to it, or related to it.

ḤUSAIN.—He is neither joined to the universe, nor separate from it; neither the one thing nor the other.

TOUMA.—What then?

ḤUSAIN.—I do not know.

TOUMA.—If you are talking about spatial separation and spatial conjunction I dare say you are right enough, since everything spiritual is really beyond spatial considerations. But I am going far deeper. The question is: Is God connected in any way with His universe, or related to it?

ḤUSAIN.—'Connexion' implies limitation, and something of a fettered nature. Therefore, He is not connected with the universe.

TOUMA.—Is He related to it, then?

ḤUSAIN.—Of course.

TOUMA.—What relation?

Ḥusain.—That of Creator to a creation, for example.

Touma.—Excellent! then, He is also connected! for every relation is a connexion. You cannot get over that. If two entities stand in any relation whatsoever to each other, if you merely hold them together in the same act of thought, they are thereby connected in their aspect of relation. In other words, relation reacts upon each entity related.

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—Reacts! you are now imputing passivity to the Godhead!

Touma.—Face the question, man, and don't be scared by verbal or traditional logic. We shall say something about this 'passivity' later on. But in the meantime do you admit that a relation, the relation between Creator and created, for example, implies a connexion, a nexus of some sort?

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—No! I must deny it. I cannot limit God by any nexus with His creation. He must be totally free from any such limitation.

Touma.—Then, the alternative is pure agnosticism. For if there is no connexion, there is a gulf, horribly dark, between God and the finite world. No bridge, no thought even, can span that gulf, for every bridge is a nexus; every thought that brings God into relation with this world of space and time reacts upon Him, and in some way limits Him. No! He is, according

to your logic, beyond thought. And so your transcendence theory, as I said, leaves you with a name, not an entity, a mere expression made up of A-l-l-á-h—totally destitute of all content.

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—There is some verbal juggling here.

TOUMA.—No, my objections are based on necessities of thought, not quibbling of words. Let me try to show you—and it is the second of the two points with which I began—that Islám itself finds it absolutely impossible to keep this strained theory of transcendence; its own language conflicts with it. You say, for example, that God sent a prophet or an angel. From where, to where?

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—The language is metaphorical, suited to us whose thought and expressions cannot escape associations of space. Any beginner in theology knows that.

TOUMA.—I do not deny it. I quite agree. But I must point out that, even admitting this, such language points to a nexus of some sort, if not of space, then of some sort, otherwise the language is not merely metaphorical, but meaningless.

HANNA.—Why, yes, and similarly thousands of expressions both in the Qur'án and the Bible, which say that God said something, and then a man said or did something, and then after that, God did something else, and then sent an angel, and so on; to what do all these words point if

not to an order of time, nearer or farther, past, present or future? Is not this to bring God at once into the realm of the conditioned?

SHAIKH 'ABDU'LLÁH.—My dear friend, these are only human expressions. God Himself holds together past and present and future in one timeless existence.

TOUMA.—Very possibly, though it is futile to say that we can conceive of what that means. But again I insist; first, that to gain any intelligible idea of God at all you have been compelled to use language that ostensibly brings Him within the circle of the conditioned; and second that whatever allowances we make for metaphor, the language points to a nexus between God and man; something taking place between them; God's action in some way connected with (if I do not say made dependent on) man's. In one word, the exaggerated transcendence has now been tacitly abandoned by its own champions. The deity whom that theory affirms is the merest mental abstraction, not a reality, and we are landed by it, as I said, in an absolute agnosticism.

II—THE MUSLIM VIEW AND SOME OF ITS IMPLICATIONS

After some more discussion upon the points raised by Touma Effendi 'Abdu'l-Masiḥ, the hour being late, the Society adjourned and came

together the following Friday to hear the continuation of the discussion, and Touma, being called upon by the president, rose and said:—

In all the discussion that arose last Friday I did not hear one answer to my contentions, namely: (1) that the tanzíh which Muslim theologians attribute to God leads to pure agnosticism, because it places Him not only entirely outside the world of *things*, but also (if you think well) outside the world of *thought* too; and (2) that Muslim theologians, and the Qur'án itself, inconsistently therewith use language that brings God within the categories of relation, of space, and of time. You have therefore this dilemma; either hold on to your one-sided transcendence, in which case you must be content with a God about whom you can assert nothing, while you are at the same time bound to give up prophecy and the Qur'án; or, give up this exaggerated transcendence, in which case you will be speedily led to the Christian position!

Many Members.—God forbid!

Touma.—I cannot see that it would be such a tragedy as all that!

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—It is easy to do destructive work in theology; we are waiting for your constructive defence of the Christian idea of God.

Touma.—You shall not be disappointed. But I have not finished my criticism. I want to show

you that the popular Muslim mind is, as a matter of fact, often an utter blank with regard to God. What is that popular rhyme I heard the other day?

Kullu má khatar fi bálik,
Fahwa halik,
Wallahu bikhiláfi thálik.[1]

Listen to that! There speaks the popular agnostic! What a sad tale that jingle tells of an unknown God! Do you observe how you are directed to evacuate your mind of every positive concept, and then, when it is blank and dark enough, call the abstraction that remains, 'God'? Or, to put it another way, you are directed to negate all your conceptions and then deify the resulting bundle of negations!

'ABDU'LLÁH.—Pooh! An absurd rhyme!

AḤMAD.—I am but a simple fellow, but I know that there is truth in what Touma Effendi says, and that in that rhyme you do indeed hear the very heart of thousands of Muslims speaking. How often, as I spoke of God or bowed to Him, has that rhyme occurred to me, and I have seen just a black gulf where I looked expecting to find God. (A pause.)

ḤUSAIN.—Pshaw! What is all this atheistic nonsense! I fall back upon the ideas mentioned

[1] This jingle may be roughly rendered as follows:—

Whatever idea your mind comes at,
I tell you flat
God is not that.

in 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ's opening speech, and I maintain that the seven attributes of God, deduced by orthodox Muslim theology, do give a distinct, intelligible, positive conception of a personal God, Him who has life, knowledge, will, and power; hearing, sight, and speech. What more do you want?

Touma.—And I repeat that on the basis of pure tanzíh these attributes become unmeaning; or else that they logically conduct you to something that is not Islám; and that, even so, they are in themselves a terribly deficient description of the true God.

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—How?

Touma.—With regard to the last point (that they are in any case a terribly deficient description of the true God) the subject is so vast that I must beg to put off its unfolding to another occasion. I would only say here briefly that nowhere do I discern in these seven attributes the two essential ones of love and holiness.

Ḥusain.—Holiness is included among the ninety-nine names of God.

Touma.—Yes, but with what signification?

Ḥusain.—Not ethical goodness certainly, for that is a thing that is only appropriate to the world of space and time.

Touma.—What then?

Ḥusain.—I think it means His absolute sublimity above all created and mortal things.

TOUMA.—Why, that is simply our old friend tanzíh[1] back again with another name!

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—I think that holiness is included in will. God wills that certain things are wrong and they are wrong, certain others right and they are right.

ḤUSAIN.—While as for love, you Christians annoy me with the word. Love is with you a synonym of weakness, of desire, and therefore deficiency. Love in God is simply His mercy.

TOUMA.—Well, where is mercy in your list of the seven attributes?

ḤUSAIN.—When God wills to favour an individual He has mercy on and good-will for him. To call this love is merely accommodation to human parlance. When He wills to condemn another individual He withdraws His mercy or good-will, and thus by another accommodation to human parlance you may talk of His wrath.

TOUMA.—It is just as I suspected. Islám reduces every attribute of God to pure will or power. Love, mercy, holiness, wrath, all are mere expressions of cold, motiveless will. Knowledge only knows the possibilities of will. power is will in action. Seeing, hearing, and speaking are mere manifestations of this will or this power. The universe, including the wills of men, is a merest machine, of which the driving force is the will

[1] Tanzíh is the Muslim term for the doctrine of God's absolute trancendence of the created universe.

of God, driving it God only knows why or where! I absolutely cannot see how this system is any better than a hopeless materialism, for both the one and the other are a pantheism of pure force. You have simply substituted for the materialist's term, 'natural force', the theologian's term, 'the power of God'. The names are different, but the thought is one. Thus we see once more how unrelieved transcendence always leads to its opposite; before we saw it led to agnosticism, now we see it leads to materialism, and in a moment we shall see it lead to pantheism and the denial of phenomena altogether. There must be something wrong about a doctrine to lead to such untoward results.

AL-HINDI.—Your mention of pantheism interests me much. How do you make that out?

TOUMA.—I will tell you with pleasure. But I want to say a word first on the Muslim doctrine of the attributes of God.

III—A FALSE PHILOSOPHY

I have demonstrated that the exaggerated Islámic doctrine of tanzíh leads to pure agnosticism; and further that the exaggerated prominence given to will and power in the Muslim conception of God leads to an almost materialistic conception of the Deity as pure force. Now I want to show that the very notion of creation itself is really incompatible with the Muslim doctrine of God.

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—Do your worst.

Touma.—Go back then with me to the seven attributes mentioned by you. With regard to knowledge, I would ask: What was there for God to know from all eternity? To the mortal mind the act of knowledge always implies the passing over of the self to a not-self, to an object that is other than the self. And really the same question might be asked about most of the remaining attributes; almost every one implies, according to Muslim ideas, something other than God for God to work upon; e.g., power implies a material for the power to be manifested in; will would be barren and empty without something to will; sight implies something seen; hearing, something to be heard; speech, some one to speak to. We are therefore led to this strange conclusion, that these essential, eternal attributes of God depend for their very existence upon phenomena, upon the conditioned universe!

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—Well, even supposing the attributes do so depend, God Himself, the substance that underlies all those attributes, remains and is independent.

Touma.—That seems to me to be flat unbelief; (1) because you are now trying to make out that the attributes are not eternal and so you separate them from God, which is against all theology; (2) because a substance apart from all its attributes is an abstraction—it is nothing at all. So that, yet

once more, you have led us to blank agnosticism. Or, you have made God depend for very existence upon something not Himself. You have involved Him with the conditioned in order to give reality to His essential attributes.

Ḥusain.—No! He is independent. For He need never have created, and He would still have been the same God.

Touma.—But how could He in that case have been the God characterized as powerful, knowing, hearing, seeing and speaking?

Ḥusain.—He would have known phenomena as possibilities and so have been potentially a hearer, seer, speaker, and willer.

Touma.—A very barren existence; and the difficulty remains, for you have simply now made God dependent on the thought of a possible universe, instead of an actual one. But the dependence on the conditioned remains.

Ḥusain.—No, it cannot be! I deny the necessity even of His conception of a potential universe.

Touma.—In that case all those attributes become absolutely eclipsed, and the idea of a God in relation to a universe finally withdraws into the unknown and the unknowable, the unspeakable, yes! and the unthinkable!

Hanna.—True; His emergence from His absoluteness to do the act of creation is, as we have already seen, impossible on pure Muslim princi-

ples, for there is involved in this a species of becoming—I mean in the non-Creator becoming a Creator—as well as the limitation involved in entering into relationship with a finite universe of space and time after the timeless ages of solitary independence and self-sufficing. In one word, the ideas of absolute tanzíh and creation are incompatible; I see that clearly.

AL-HINDI.—You have reached the point that the old Persian Muslim pantheists reached—some of the profoundest thinkers that Islám has produced, though they were heretical—I mean the Ṣúfís. I have studied these men and I confess that in the reaction from the barren doctrine of tanzíh I was greatly attracted by them. Perhaps this is because I am an Indian, for Indians always lean to pantheism. Yet something restrained me from definitely embracing Ṣúfíism. It seemed to me to be too obviously a rebound from extreme tanzíh and therefore to be itself an exaggeration, an extreme. What I want is some economy of faith to harmonize these two extremes in a truer whole.

TOUMA (most earnestly).—And that is just what I have found Christianity to do!

AL-HINDI.—If I could see that clearly I would follow you in embracing Christianity!

TOUMA.—I believe I could make it clear to you. But you have not yet told the Society what this Ṣúfíism is, nor how it represents a reaction

against the barrenness and self-contradictions of orthodox tanzíh, or rather is really its logical outcome.

AL-HINDI.—The Ṣúfí thinker argued that to separate the world from God, and yet to ascribe any form of reality to the world, was to set up another one beside the only One, another real beside the only Real, in other words, another god beside God. Thus he felt the doctrine of tanzíh contradicted itself and led to polytheism. How did the Ṣúfí escape from this position? He did so by denying reality to the finite world of phenomena. He called it delusion. For Him the creed, 'There is no god but God', was invested with a new and terrible meaning, 'There is nothing existing but God'. The world, the soul, all things conditioned are mere illusory appearances, and one day shall be merged and lost in the one Reality, God, just as the drop is lost when merged in the ocean. Finite existence being a delusion is also an evil, because it is a departure from the One. It is atheism and polytheism to think that anything exists except God.

ḤUSAIN.—What extraordinary nonsense!

AL-HINDI.—Nevertheless it is a logical deduction from the extreme Muslim idea. For if, as we saw, the very existence of phenomena trenches on the absoluteness of God, your only logical course is to cut away phenomena and deny their existence altogether.

TOUMA.—But you have not told us the dangerous side of Ṣúfíism and all pantheism generally.

AL-HINDI.—It is that in denying the reality of phenomena it denies the reality of the distinction between good and evil, and thus paves the way to utter libertinism. Also, in denying the distinction between God and the self it leads the way either to a monstrous pride or to a religious ecstasy which is in reality madness; and this is the real explanation of the exhibition of those poor darwíshes that degrade religion here in the East.

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—My brain whirls. You seem to have shut my mind into a trap. I wish to make God transcend phenomena and be absolute, since to be involved in them would be to degrade Him to their level. Yet, when I try thus to exalt Him in my mind, I either leave phenomena independent (in which case, how is God absolute?), or else I utterly blot them out of existence and make them delusion; or else (awful thought!) I blot God Himself out of existence as an abstraction of the mind. Terrible dilemma! Who will deliver me?

TOUMA (half to himself).—'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' (To 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ)—When men get into a cul-de-sac and think their position hopeless it means they have taken a wrong turn, and that they must go back to beyond the point where they took that turn, and start upon another path.

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—And what was that point where I went wrong?

TOUMA.—At the unrelieved, unmitigated, one-sided, and exaggerated assertion of the transcendence and absoluteness of God. Of course the doctrine has an aspect of truth; but it is not the whole truth. I believe Christianity goes nearer the whole truth by having the courage to assert another of truth's aspects. The economy or harmony of these aspects brings us as near absolute truth as our minds are at present capable of coming. And therefore I am a Christian!

IV—MUSLIM THEOLOGY AND ETHICS

(1) *Power—effect on human initiative.*

In the next session, Fahmy rose and said to Touma: The point I want to have debated this time is this—we have discussed philosophical opinions which have no apparent practical connexion with man's life; but I want to be convinced that theology has a moral influence, and that a man's religious creed must needs affect his morals, conduct and aspirations.

TOUMA.—Undoubtedly it must.

FAHMY.—But you have not yet explained this matter, neither have you shown the connexion between Muslim theology and Muslim morals.

TOUMA.—Thanks for calling my attention to this important point, one which has occupied my

mind for long. Do you believe, my friend, that one would become a Christian in this country, and suffer what he suffers, if his belief mattered no more to him morally than his belief in the truth of Euclid's theorems? Do you not know that it is Christian morals that have led me to Christianity, and are still keeping me in my faith?

Ḥusain.—You must not belittle the virtues which Islám has spread in the world.

Touma.—I welcome virtue wherever it is found; and I have found it in Islám; but all I have found in Islám I have found fulfilled in Christ, while I have discovered three great defects in Islám.

Ḥusain.—What are they?

Touma.—I will mention them in order. We have discussed the subject of transcendence, and have seen how Muslims exempt God from all responsibility and express all His attributes (such as will, strength, mercy, vengeance,) in terms of 'power'. In other words, they make all those attributes simple manifestation of will-power. But this laying so much stress on power and overlooking the other attributes reacts on the ethics of Islám in three ways. And the first is lack of the initiative in Muslims, a point which history and experience testify.

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—This is not true. What encourages man to action so well as the idea that

God is impelling him, as is the case with Muḥammadans?

Touma.—Yes, but that has been mainly manifest in special times and circumstances, which are intermittent and rare. It stands to reason that, as a rule, the attributing of the whole of human action to an omnipotent and transcendent God is a thing which discourages men and makes them lose heart. Those who believe in fate generally assume an attitude of passivity and accept things as they are, believing that they are caused by God, and that consequently it is no use trying to resist or do anything. Many a Muḥammadan mother, for instance, sees on her baby's eyes the flies which carry ophthalmia and does not attempt to drive them away, as she believes that it was God who sent them there. A Muslim governor may see his country in a rotten economic and social condition, but he does not as much as move a finger to remedy the state of things, owing to a belief (at bottom) that they are all the will of God. Now it is evident that but for such a blind belief energetic attempts would be made to remedy wrongs. But I am sorry to say that I do not see in Islám itself anything to stimulate or promote initiative. Muḥammadans believe that God's revelation to man is finished, and that the best age is now past. Is not this the reason of the barrenness one detects in the present system of Muḥammadan

instruction when left to itself and not revised, or rather wholly replaced, by European methods?

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—History disproves your statements. What human achievement can you compare with that of the Prophet, the Companions, and the first Khalífas, and Muḥammadan generals who conquered the then known world and built up a colossal empire in a miraculously short time?

Touma.—Yes, but all that zeal was of the nature of a temporary fit; for those men believed that a divine power was pushing them forward for that special work. Hence, when the fit or period was over, there was a drift back into fatalism and stagnation. The extension of Islám has gone on since then I admit; but is there a single one of you who is proud of its unmitigated results, whether in Africa or Asia?

Ḥusain.—You cannot accuse Islám of such charges. Were not Baghdad, Cairo and Cordova the centres of learning, light and leading to the world?

Touma.—That is true. But how partial and evanescent has been their light! a light, moreover, which often glowed in spite of, not because of, Muslim orthodoxy. Whether in political or whether in intellectual life Islám seems to have been unable to sustain a steady effort, persisting and growing century after century. Stagnation has always set in, and continued; whereas every

revival in a Muslim country to-day is palpably and confessedly derived straight from Europe.

FAHMY.—It seems to me that there is something in what you say. Really we need a theory which will explain the reason of the degeneration which we see since the fifteenth century in Muḥammadan countries, whether social, financial, or scientific; whereas Christendom seems to go straight ahead in every respect. Yes, truly Islám is asleep.

TOUMA.—Yes, and for no other reason, I believe, than the one I mentioned. The Christian view of God, in itself, encourages man to push forward, while the Muḥammadan view, in itself, discourages him and inclines him to sit still.

(2) *Love—in God and in man.*

After this meeting many members began to think seriously about the discussion and how it had turned into a discussion about ethics.

On the Thursday evening, when Touma was walking in Shubra Road near the Rod-el-Farag crossing, he was met by four men of whom he only knew one—an old Azhár class-mate. They all accosted him with abuse, then gave him several blows which made him for a time half insensible. But this did not prevent him from attending the meeting which was held on the morrow. Traces of the beating he had got could still be seen, so all the members stood around

him and expressed their sympathy with him. But he only replied that 'the servant is not greater than his master', and that he did not heed the injury that he had received, seeing that his Master had been far more cruelly treated, to which remark Shaikh Radwán replied: 'An apostate must not expect less; the Qur'án indeed speaks of a far greater punishment.'

'Strange', Touma said, 'that the Qur'án should teach vengeance and command Muslims to retaliate in the bitterest degree, while Christ said, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you".'

At this meeting a new member came, called Muḥammad Effendi Lutfi. He was a follower of the late Shaikh Muḥammad 'Abdu, and had written a book on religious controversy between Christ and Muḥammad. On hearing the text which Touma had quoted he said: 'That is altogether an impossible and visionary ideal. The spirit of vengeance is an instinct in man, and every creed which maintains a visionary element is false. Now Islám exhibits a more practical spirit, and one which better agrees with human nature. Consequently it is the true religion, and the text which Touma Effendi has just quoted, if it is really a quotation, is nonsensical.'

Touma.—Christ did not only teach this doctrine, but He lived up to it. And He honoured me yesterday by allowing me to follow His example,

for I went home yesterday not feeling anything but a strong desire to pray for those who had ill-treated me.

A short silence ensued, after which al-Hindi said: 'I came across a tract on which was simply written the following, in parallel columns':—

Prayer of Christians for Muslims (used every Good Friday at Church)	Prayer of Muslims for Christians (used every Friday in the Mosques)
O merciful God, have mercy on all Muḥammadans, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart and contempt of Thy Word; and fetch them home, blessed Lord, to Thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.	God, make their wives widows and their children orphans, and give their possessions to be a possession of the followers of Islám. Amen.

Judge ye.

Touma.—Gentlemen, I leave this contrast to your judgment. Yesterday's event and this tract have unconsciously brought us to the subject appointed now for our discussion. You have asked me to show the relation between theology and ethics in Islám. Now it will be remembered that I have already shown the insufficiency of the absolute doctrine of transcendence of Islám in respect of its paralyzing effect upon initiative. I come to-day to a second effect of this doctrine. I find

that it has no place for love, mercy and self-sacrifice. And the two defects have a common source, namely, the reducing of all the attributes of God to absolute will and absolute power, and the fact that the doctrine of pure transcendence does not admit of any love or self-sacrifice being attributed to God.

MUḤAMMAD.—I deny all that you have said, except what relates to self-sacrifice, for God forbid that He should ever sacrifice Himself! Such an act would be an absolute proof of limitation and weakness.

TOUMA.—Let me explain the meaning of strength and weakness in their moral sense. Physical power is in itself a thing common to the brute and a machine. But moral power is quite different, and if we ascribe unqualified physical power to God we do Him wrong, for such a power is in itself, as I have said, a purely unmoral or mechanical thing.

MUḤAMMAD.—Do you want to make God like men?

TOUMA.—No; but I want to make men like God!

MUḤAMMAD.—You do not do justice to Islám, for you deny that it ascribes love to God, and that the Qur'án often says that 'God loves' the believers.

TOUMA.—The texts which refer to this are very rare and occasional, and 'love' does not occupy

in them the same position that it does in our Gospel, which teaches that 'God is love'. Besides, your books assert that love is merely an aspect of God's favour, that is, His favour is irresponsibly bestowed or denied. This, then, leads us back again to absolute will-power.

Ḥusain.—Quite true. I have this very day come across this statement in one of the Muslim text-books used in Egypt to-day.

Muḥammad.—But how do you deny self-sacrifice in Islám when the very word Islám denotes 'self-surrender'? Besides, with what can you compare the prophet's self-sacrificing efforts in the way of truth? And where do you find a parallel to the self-sacrifice of the Companions and the valour of Muslim leaders, who risked their very lives in their religious wars? Are not these a clear proof of self-sacrifice?

Touma.—I do admire your prophet in the beginning of his career when he fought for truth and bore every persecution. But why did he not continue thus? Evidently because he thought all along that persecutions were only to be endured until the persecuted became able himself to apply force. Hence, when Muḥammad's position was strengthened and his followers increased in number, he changed his tactics and often treated his opposers with terrible physical severity. Where, then, do you find a parallel to the doctrine which Christ taught and proved Himself, namely, that

even the bearing of persecutions has a victory of its own, and that he who endures to the end must triumph, without ever resorting to punitive expeditions, assaults, assassinations, or other violent methods?

MUḤAMMAD.—I do not see the difference at all.

AL-HINDI.—Pardon, but I see it very clearly.

MUḤAMMAD.—But did not Muslims often sacrifice themselves, even unto death, for God's truth?

TOUMA.—When, except just at the very first (in a very few instances) as I have allowed?

MUḤAMMAD.—In their religious wars.

TOUMA.—Do you mean when they shed the blood of their enemies? Is that what you would call self-sacrifice? Have you forgotten that the subject of our discussion is love and self-sacrifice for others?

MUḤAMMAD.—Well, they shed their own blood too. And why should we not say that they did this because of their love to the unbelievers and their desire to win them to Islám? It was in the nature of the case that some were killed during these endeavours.

TOUMA.—That is a whimsically novel view! Unfortunately, it is not true. History tells us that those wars were not waged because of the Muslims' love towards the unbelievers, but because they believed, simply, that God had commanded them to fight, and (in many cases) because they were stimulated by the hope of boundless spoil

and reward in this life, and that in the next whosoever was killed in battle would be rewarded with Ḥúrís in the paradise in which heavenly rivers flow for ever. Failure to join the wars, moreover, was to be punished with an everlasting fire.

MUḤAMMAD.—Has Christendom never persecuted? Has Christendom never advanced itself by the forcible means you speak of?

TOUMA.—If it has, in the past, it has done so in the teeth of its Founder's commands, example, and doctrine; and moreover nowhere in all the world does it do so to-day, as far as I am aware. But in Islám those forcible methods are according to the spirit and letter of this Book, the precept and practice of this Prophet. In saying this, I am not saying that Islám lends itself in theory, or has lent itself in practice, to forced individual conversions. I am simply saying that the main path of Islámic advance has been the war-path; and that the Muslim feels neither love nor pity towards the 'káfir'.

HANNA.—It is ridiculous, indeed, to say that Muslims ever showed or show anything but antipathy, or at least apathy, towards the káfirs themselves. The very word smells of contempt, scorn and hatred! As to self-sacrifice, sympathizing or sorrowing for the souls of others, Islám is utterly void of such a thing, though this is love; not the travesty that Muḥammad Effendi alluded to.

MUḤAMMAD.—What contemptible weakness is love as you describe it!

TOUMA.—Yet therein is the glory of Christianity ever since the days of Christ, who wept over Jerusalem and shed His own blood, and not the blood of others, to restore the sinner, without using any force or violence whatever. And so did all the saints and martyrs, down to recent martyrs such as Livingstone and many another, who laid down their own lives to save the lives of others. I also am willingly ready to lay down my life if I could thereby bring one soul to Christ.

SHAIKH RADWÁN (ASIDE).—You really deserved death—not for the sake of others, but as a warning to them!

MUḤAMMAD.—What is this prating about love, weeping and shedding of blood? What is sin that it requires all this trouble? God created men as He pleased and will judge them in the end as He pleases.

HANNA.—As usual! The whole matter resolved into the category of arbitrary will-power!

TOUMA.—What you say brings us to the third deficiency in Muslim ethics, to which I will refer—its ignorance of the true meaning of holiness as ascribed to God, and as ascribed to man.

(3) *Holiness—in God and Man.*

After the conversation on the place of love in Islámic theology and ethics, it became more and

more apparent that the interest of the members was becoming more and more personal, and not simply theoretical as it had begun by being. 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ repeatedly confessed to Touma, in private, that he would have thought twice about changing his religion had he considered more fully this ethical aspect, and that he had become Muslim chiefly because of the Muslim doctrine of Unity, and his difficulties about the Trinity.

At the next meeting they continued the subject as follows:—

Touma.—Our subject is: The effect of Muslim theological doctrine on Muslim notions of God's holiness, and on that of man. Speaking as one who has experienced both Islám and Christianity, I honestly feel that I do not exaggerate when I say that Islám has no doctrine of the holiness of God. It is true that the epithet 'holy' does figure among the ninety-nine names of God; but the more you try to see if anything intelligible lies behind that name, the greater is the difficulty you experience in doing so. I ask Muslim members to tell me what they mean by it.

'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ.—There is no difficulty at all. It means that He is too high, exalted, sublime, holy, to be associated with any creature.

Kohen.—That was certainly one of the senses which our old Hebrew prophets attached to the word, but it is certain that they gradually gave to it a far fuller and a richer content than that.

Isaiah, for example, when he saw the vision of God, and heard Him hailed by the heavenly beings as 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' and was thereby smitten with the sense of his own moral uncleanness, assuredly did not think that holy signified mere sublimity or infinity.

TOUMA.—Many thanks to you, Kohen Effendi, for your most helpful remark. Yes, truly, 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ Effendi, your definition of holy is meagre to the last degree. Don't you see that it is simply equivalent to 'transcendent' (munazzah) over again? It adds no new idea whatever.

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—Why should it?

TOUMA.—Well, how can you relate this epithet 'holy', when applied to man, to the same epithet 'holy' when applied to God if, in the latter case, it only means sublime, transcendent? How can man ever be or be made sublime, trancendent, or be 'holy', in this sense?

'ABDU'L-FATTÁḤ.—That is a puzzler, I admit.

TOUMA.—A puzzler to the Muslim who refuses to admit any point of likeness between God and man; but not to the Christian, who believes that man was 'made in God's image', or capable of attaining that image, just in this very relation of holiness.

AL-HINDI.—I see clearly that 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ was too hasty in practically identifying holiness with transcendence; I realize that the word must have something or other to do with moral good.

But the difficulty is, how can we, in saying that God is holy, relate the word to moral goodness as we know it? Moral qualities, chastity, justice, and so on, are entirely human affairs, and cease to have any meaning in the divine and infinite sphere in which God, as God, has His being. How, then, can God be called holy? How can He even be called good?

'Uthmán.—Here is the solution. God made some actions bad, leading to misery; others good, leading to bliss. His holiness consists in His will that men should follow the latter, and in His displeasure when they do not do so.

Touma.—Once more you have shown that, while you can struggle to a positive concept about God, you cannot get farther than that of force. What you said just now is simply another way of stating that God wills a certain thing, and with sovereign power carries it out. But no new or moral meaning has been attached to the word 'holy' by your definition. Moreover, He did not will, as you wrongly say He did, that all men should follow the path that leads to bliss, or do the actions connected by Him with that end.

Aḥmad.—I confess I attach no real meaning to it for my part, and I never met a Muslim who did.

Touma.—An awful defect! For how can men love holiness, if they do not find it in the Godhead, or find only its empty name? Forgive me, then, when I say that I have found Muslim

ethics silent about holiness, even as Muslim theology is. But what a thirst for it is found in the lives of Christ and His disciples, and in every believer who has caught their spirit; to whom God stands revealed as the Holy God, in a real positive sense.

HANNA.—Let me take up my parable about this Muslim identification of God's attitude to goodness and badness, that is, His holiness, with a simple absolute decree. Here is the root of the whole evil. For, first of all, it is evident that if God is the direct agent in everything, it is absurd to blame sinful man. If God makes a decree that a certain action shall be labelled evil, and another decree that certain men shall commit that action, I fail to attach any meaning to the wrath which He is supposed to feel against those men, or the vengeance He exacts from them. The whole thing is a patent absurdity.

TOUMA.—Yes, but a more serious aspect is this: that those who hold this (and most Muslims do, at the bottom of their hearts) can have no real hatred of sin themselves. If men are decreed to it, how can they loathe it, or feel any real sense of God's wrath and anger against it as such?

'ABDU'LLÁH.—Well, since other attempts at showing what holiness is in man, and how it is related to the Alláh of us Muslims, have failed, let me try a solution. The matter is quite simple. God (as has been already said) shows His

holiness by making certain actions evil, and then making painful results follow them, in this world and the next; and man shows his holiness by avoiding these actions and hating them for their painful results, and vice versa.

TOUMA.—An unworthy, insufficient conception! In this case you are not loving holiness and hating iniquity, but only liking the reward of the one and disliking the penalty of the other. But, if so, how can you be said to loathe sin with your conscience, because it is against the holy nature of God and grieves Him?

'ABDU'LLÁH.—What is conscience? and what is the holy nature of God? and what effect can our sin have upon Him? God suffers no effect wrought upon Himself. He has no emotions. How can He grieve? This is atheism.

TOUMA.—I might say, how can He be angry? for anger is just as much an emotion as grief.

'ABDU'LLÁH.—Anger is only a metaphor signifying absence of favour. He feels nothing. Feeling is weakness. Grief is weakness. Your whole conception of God is weakness.

TOUMA.—And on what principle does He favour, or the reverse?

'ABDU'LLÁH.—He is not called in question for what He does. He does what He pleases.

TOUMA.—Once again you have shown that cold, unmoral, passionless, arbitrary will is the only positive conception you can form of God. In

your description I recognize no feature of my God and Father revealed to me in and by Jesus Christ! The one is an inaccessible, autocratic, inscrutable Sulṭán, terribly to be dreaded; the other is a holy, loving, royal Father, to be feared and loved!

HANNA.—There is yet another reason why men cannot possibly love holiness and hate unholiness, or understand what the terms mean, when they think that good actions were only made good and praiseworthy by an absolute and inscrutable decree, and vice versa. It is that, according to this doctrine, what we now call good might have been made penal, and evil rewarded with Paradise! If it had been so, 'Abdu'lláh, could you have called God in question?

'ABDU'LLÁH.—Evil would then, of course, have been good. God is never to be called in question, or made responsible.

AL-HINDI.—Good God! What a frightful idea, —and yet Muslim theologians have not scrupled to draw that logical conclusion. But is the case conceivable?

TOUMA.—Certainly it is, on Islámic premises, namely, that evil is not essentially evil (because it is against God's nature), but only evil by decree and will; and that painful results are joined to evil actions by an external necessity, and not because the latter could not have produced anything else. If the connexion between evil action

and painful results is external, and depends on a decree of God, He might have reversed that cause and that effect. The very Muslim words for moral good and evil (ḥalál and ḥarám), support this view; they give the notion that certain actions are permitted, others tabooed, by a Governor, 'by order' so to speak, not pronounced as essentially holy, or unholy, by One who is Himself in nature and essence holy. When I was a Muslim, I thought of good and evil even thus; just as a code of civil regulations for preserving order, the infringing of which would irritate the Governor, as thwarting His will or (at most) upsetting His arrangements (though, apparently, He also willed that His arrangements should be upset); but as sinning against Him or grieving His heart and His nature, never! How can any one, who thus believes, be said to love righteousness and hate iniquity? Is not this, indeed, a fatal defect in Muslim ethics?

'Abdu'lláh.—The slave rebels against the will of his Lord. That is sin. What more do you want? This is my last word.

Touma.—Disobedience is, indeed, the root of sin. But wherein lies its guilt? In that it is rebellion against a king's imperious mandate, mysterious because its basis is utterly unknowable; or a Father's loving command, known, because it is simply the outcome of his own nature?

'Abdu'lláh.—The former. The latter is a pure human fancy, unworthy of the glory of God.

Touma.—Once more we have seen the difference between you and us. Your God is pure Will. Our God is pure Love.

V—CONCLUSION

After the close of the discussions on the application of Muslim deistic theology to Muslim ethical ideas it became yet more clear that the interest of the Society was becoming less and less merely theoretic, and that their practical lives were being affected by what they had been discussing. But this practical and emotional interest showed itself in different, and even opposite, ways. In some of the members, like Ḥusain, it appeared in increased thoughtfulness and moral earnestness. Moreover, the Gospel which on that Easter Monday, a year before he had despised, he now frequently studied; more than once he had read it while walking or seated in the porches of al-Azhár, and once he had got so deeply immersed that he even forgot to go to his lecture in Moslem law. Often in his room in the Sikket el Gedida he would take it out and read it far into the night, even until retiring to rest.

Aḥmad al-Hindi was also realizing that a crisis in his life was approaching. 'One of the curses of my nature', he would say to 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ

(the Copt who had become a Muslim) 'is this proneness to theorize about everything; to spend one's life in talking and thinking about spiritual and moral matters without feeling the necessity of taking action in regard to them. I have long been convinced that the Gospel is true, and that the theology which is deduced from it satisfies mind, heart and conscience in a way that ours never did or can do. What do I here? I am no longer really a Muslim, and I am not yet a Christian; and I feel this practical insincerity telling upon my character for harm. Somehow I need some help to make the plunge. Why should not every man possess his own convictions in secret? I ask the question but I know the answer to it—religion should be the most practical thing in the world, and therefore one's outward actions should all correspond to one's secret convictions.'

'There is the danger, too, of repenting after you have taken an irrecoverable step,' said 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ; 'look at me—I embraced Islám; but the words of that man Touma, and still more his life, in which I see a secret strength and grace to which I can make no pretension, have made me believe that what I did I did in ignorance, not through more perfect knowledge. But it would need nothing short of a special providence to make me incur a second time the trouble I went through before.'

The 'special providence' was nearer than 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ thought. But who could have foreseen the way it came about?

The Shaikh 'Abdu'lláh and Radwán got more and more angry with what they called the infatuation of these members, and their malice was most of all against Touma whom they regarded as the real cause of the whole infidel movement.

'Nothing too bad could happen to such a fellow', said Radwán one day. 'I should like to see him get what he deserves and make him smart with something he will not easily forget.'

'So should I. He is probably a coward, and something of the sort you mention would be the best way of making him return to the true religion. It would therefore be positively a meritorious act.'

'Yes', said Radwán, 'and even if it did not have that result, it would be a species of punishment and so still meritorious.'

'Of course', assented 'Abdu'lláh, 'and I suppose there are few Muslims who would disagree with us, or if they heard that such a one had suffered some violence would condemn the act as wrong or contrary to our sacred law.'

'Yes, and if that is so, why should there exist, I should like to know, a civil code which summarily condemns what we think lawful. This is a point I greatly resent. Depend upon

it, if we lived in a country where our law had full scope, there would be no such thing as a perversion. Look for them in Turkey and you will not find them—and for a very good reason.'

'What you say is most true. And, à propos, I heard a funny thing the other day; I was in the Muḥáfiẓah on some business, and I heard a Christian priest remonstrating with an official there about the slackness of some policeman in protecting one of these rascals of perverts. What do you think he said? He said, "Reverend Sir, the poor man is to be excused. If he were left to his own law and conscience, he would have to *do* the very thing that you want him now to *prevent*."'

'Capital', laughed Radwán savagely; 'but still the fact remains that if anything is to be done, it must be secret, for our actions in this country have to be answered for to the civil courts; and I fear that even the most trivial violence to Touma would be counted an assault, and punishment brought home to its author.'

'How shall we manage, then?'

'I have a plan. Touma lives in the Shubra district. To-morrow evening I happen to know that he is going to visit Ḥusain in the Sikket al-Gedida, for I heard the two make the appointment. I do not know exactly at what hour he will return to his house, but I know that when

he does, he must cross that dark piece of open ground with trees lining the path which lies behind the Shubra Road, and between that and Sharia al-Ghurab. There we can await him and deal him something that will give him something to think of.' 'Good', said 'Abdu'lláh, 'but let us take Ḥasan with us. He is not known to Touma, and it will be an advantage to be able to address him without being recognized.'

'Pooh, what does it matter if he does recognize us? He can do nothing without a witness. We should simply have to deny everything—you surely don't think that would be wrong, do you?'

'No, but still it would be preferable not to be recognized if possible.'

'Well, have it your own way.'

The next day was Friday, and the two having attended midday prayers as usual spent the afternoon in completing their arrangements. That night, three figures in the ordinary black cloaks of Egyptian peasants, and with heads muffled with wrappings, as though for protection from the night chill, might have been seen in the open space between the Shubra Road and the Sharia al-Ghurab. Hidden by the deep shadow of the trees, they attracted no one's attention. Clouds covered the moon. It rained slightly. The ghait was entirely deserted. A footstep was heard at the other end of the path leading through the ghait. It came nearer, and a voice was heard humming

a Christian hymn. 'It is he', whispered Radwán, 'I know his voice; be ready as he passes the trees.'

As he passed the spot the three sprang out on him. Taken entirely unawares he was at once rendered helpless by the powerful grasp of two of them who held him tightly while Ḥassan addressed him: 'Infidel! How was it that you went back from the true religion? Hell will be your portion for ever unless you recant. What have you to say.'

Throttled by their grasp he could only just gasp out: 'Hell has been conquered by Jesus Christ my Saviour. I am His, whether in this world or the next.'

'Be silent with that name! Will you renounce your false religion?'

'And deny Christ? Never!'

'Take then!'

As he spoke each of them dealt him a violent blow with the fist on his head. Up to that time he had been struggling violently, trying with both hands to free himself from the grasp of 'Abdu'lláh and Radwán, who were both holding him. But with the blows he fell back motionless. At that instant a step was heard at the far end of the path walking rapidly. There was no time to be lost. The three men left Touma and slipped rapidly and silently away. There was no pursuit, for evidently the new-comer had

not been aware of what was taking place. In a few minutes they had regained the Shubra Road by a circuit and were mingling unconcernedly with the passers by; many of whom were dressed in a manner identical with their own.

'It will be a good lesson to him', said Radwán, 'I don't suppose it will do him any harm, but it will teach him a lesson from which I think he will profit. At any rate it is less than he merits.'

And so saying they parted company. We now turn to what befel Touma. The whole affair had not taken more than a couple of minutes. Not a soul had seen or heard anything. And even the man who had entered the ghait would have passed by his prostrate form almost invisible in the gloom unless he had heard a low groan coming out of the darkness. Groping in the direction of the voice he came upon Touma's motionless form. With an exclamation he struck a match, which burned brightly in the still air, and held it to his face. 'Great Heavens! It is Touma!'

So ejaculated the man who had crossed the ghait just after the assault. The flickering light of the match revealed the pale unconscious features of his unfortunate friend. The man's name was Ghali Girgis, a Coptic friend of Touma's, whose house was hard by at the end of the path across the ghait. He was much attached to the youth, and was filled with dismay at the state in

which he now found him. It was evident that there had been violence.

'I must get the poor fellow instantly into my house', thought he, 'that is the very first thing.' So saying, he hastened to his house, entered it, and aroused the sleeping servant. 'Come with me instantly', he said, 'and make no noise. An accident has befallen Touma Effendi, and I want you to help me to carry him in. Bring a light.'

Not waiting while the lamp was lit, he hastened back to the motionless figure and bent over it preparing himself for the work of lifting it. The moon had now risen and, in spite of the cloudy sky, gave enough light for him to observe the details of his posture. As he was doing so he noticed that the left hand had, between two of its fingers, one of the tassels of a gibba which, apparently, had been tightly gripped by the hand which now, though relaxed, still was entangled with it. By the other hand lay a small pendant, such as people hang on the end of their watch-chains. Ghali uttered an exclamation, and caught up both tassel and pendant, retaining them carefully, and he had barely done this, when the servant arrived with the light, and his attention was concentrated on the task of gently conveying his poor friend to the house close by.

They laid him upon a bed, unfastened his collar and shirt, dashed water on his face and breast, and chafed his hands. But he showed no signs

of coming to. Ghali, meanwhile, was giving directions to the servant to hasten out and fetch Dr.———, who lived not far off, or some other if he was out, and after he had summoned a doctor to go to the caracol and inform the authorities.

The man left on his errand. There was nothing left to do but to wait. The house was quite quiet. Hardly a quarter of an hour had passed since the assault: so swiftly had event succeeded event.

As the minutes passed and no one came, Ghali began to regret that he himself had not taken Touma straight to the Kasr al-Aini hospital, or to the caracol. Instincts of friendship had bid him do as he had done, and now he did not like to leave Touma's side. He thought he had better wait. The doctor could not be long in coming!

Nearly an hour passed, however, and then Ghali heard Touma give a low moan. He was immediately at his side, and to his intense relief, he saw the eyelids quiver and then open. In a moment Touma was aware that a man's face was looking into his own, and that face was Ghali's.

'Where am I?'

'In my house, dear friend—Ghali's.'

'How came I here, what has happened?'

'Nay, do not excite yourself with thought.'

'Ah, but now I seem to remember all. I was walking across the ghait and some men attacked

me. I did not recognize them, nor the voice of one who addressed me. They threatened me because of my faith, and I remember refusing to deny Him. Then I remember blows and afterwards it is a blank.'

Ghali then recollected his discovery in the ghait. He took the tassel and the pendant out of his pocket, and said: 'See what I found with you when I picked you up. They are not yours, surely?'

Touma looked at them, and, at the sight of them, a dim suspicion which had already dawned in his mind, but had been immediately rejected, became a certainty. The tassel, he felt certain, was from Radwán's gibba. The pendant he recognized, for he had often seen it hanging on 'Abdu'lláh's watch-chain. He became greatly agitated, and Ghali, noticing his agitation, begged him to be calm.

'Ghali!' cried his friend, 'give me those things and promise me, as a Christian, to say nothing about them!'

Ghali demurred. But he found that his unwillingness to assent had such a terribly exciting effect on his friend, that his resolution wavered. He besought him to be calm.

'I cannot! I think I will die if you do not give me those things. Oh, my head! . . . Can you not trust me? I have a most particular reason.'

Ghali, torn between conflicting impulses, gave him the things, putting them under his pillow, and gave him his word that he would not mention the matter. The immediate result of his action was entirely satisfactory. The deep calm of relief seemed instantly to suffuse Touma. He closed his eyes and lay very still.

At this moment a knock was heard. It announced the arrival of the doctor. The servant had found the first one he went to away from home, and had had difficulty in finding the house of another. Hence the delay. The doctor said that the servant had gone on to the caracol, and that the authorities might be expected shortly.

When the doctor had finished his examination he looked very grave indeed. He said that he was suffering from a hemorrhage in the brain, consequent on some heavy blow on the head. He afterwards told Ghali, apart, that the case was a very critical one, and that at all costs the patient must not be allowed to excite himself. But Touma, with the swift intuition that is sometimes observable in patients, had already divined the seriousness of his condition. Something told him that he was not to rise off that bed again. And now one thought, and one only, filled his whole mind and soul. He must see Radwán and 'Abdu'lláh again. At all costs he must see them, and that immediately.

The doctor was still standing in the passage giving directions to Ghali and promising to call again in the morning, when they heard Touma calling. They re-entered the room.

'Doctor', said he, 'I want to see some of my friends to-morrow morning to bid them good-bye.'

'Nonsense! you are doing very well and, moreover, it would not be good for you to see anybody.'

At this Touma became so fearfully excited that they both became quite alarmed. It was evident that, if the doctor persisted in his refusal, nothing would be able to calm the young man, and the very crisis, which they sought to avert, would be hastened. 'Well, well!' said he, 'If you keep quiet now I will tell Ghali Effendi to send for them.' The effect was instantaneous. Touma became quite quiet, and a smile hovered on his pale lips.

'It would have been useless to refuse him', said the doctor, 'if he has set his mind on seeing his friends it may do him more good than harm to have his way.' So saying, he departed.

'Who is it you want to see, dear friend?' asked Ghali, re-entering Touma's room. 'Tell me and then try to get a little sleep.'

'I want to see some members of the Society. Go to al-Hindi's house; tell him to tell the members, specially 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ, Hanna, Radwán, Ḥusain and 'Abdu'llàh. I must see these. Al-Hindi must bring them.'

Ghali promised to do as he wished, and silence reigned in the room. After a little time feet were heard on the stairs. Ghali stole to the door and opened it. The new-comers were the police authorities and the servant.

'I must make a report on this matter', said the officer, 'to send to the parquet in the morning. Can I speak with the gentleman?'

'Impossible; he has just sunk into a sleep, and the doctor absolutely forbade his being disturbed. But I can give you the answers to your questions, as it was I who found him, and he has told me all about it.'

Ghali, thereon, reported to the officer how, where, and when, he had found Touma, and Touma's own account of what took place, and the doctor's report. The officer took it all down in writing and, after carefully inspecting the spot where it happened, took his departure.

So the night wore away. Touma slept but little. For the most part he seemed in much pain, but made no sound. His lips constantly moved in prayer. At times his mind wandered, and he talked incoherently about the Society, praying to Christ for some of its members by name.

The servant knew al-Hindi's house, and very early in the morning he had delivered his message; al-Hindi, in great consternation at hearing such news of one whom he had seen but a few hours before in highest spirits and health, hurried

out to perform his errand. He went to Hanna's house first, then with him to Ḥusain's. Hanna, then, went on to 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ's house, and al-Hindi and Ḥusain went on to 'Abdu'lláh's room. They found him in, and Radwán with him. 'Have you heard the terrible news', they said, 'our poor Touma has been assaulted, and his life is in danger!'

Both men turned very white, but their agitation seemed natural enough to their unsuspecting friends. They faltered out, 'who attacked him?'

'At the *procès verbal*', replied al-Hindi, 'it was stated that they were unknown. I don't suppose it ever will be known. There is no evidence at all; and Touma told Ghali, on recovering consciousness, that he did not know the men, and that the voice of the one who spoke was unknown to him. Come along at once.'

'Come along where?' said the two Shaikhs.

'To Touma. He has asked to see some of our number, and you among them.'

'I cannot go', said 'Abdu'lláh.

'Nor I', said Radwán, 'I have work.'

Al-Hindi looked utterly astonished. 'Surely', he said, 'no work can stand in the way of this. Do you know that you may never see him again? Come, and don't waste time in words.'

'Abdu'lláh looked at Radwán. Both of them realized that to hang back would be more dangerous than to go. Besides, there was nothing to

be alarmed at. It was certain that their plan of secrecy had been completely successful. Whatever happened they were safe. It was, therefore, with hearts destitute indeed of dread, but now beginning to feel a pang of bitter regret, that they turned to follow al-Hindi and 'Abdu'l-Fatṭáḥ.

It was not yet eight o'clock when they arrived at Ghali's house in Shubra.

On entering the mandara they found that Hanna and 'Abdu'l-Fatṭáḥ had just arrived. All greeted each other with looks of concern and dismay. It was evident that Ḥusain and 'Abdu'l-Fattah were as strongly moved as Hanna and al-Hindi. The servant brought coffee, and shortly after Ghali descended. 'Touma', he said, 'was exceedingly anxious to see you, but as he cannot see all at once he has expressed a wish to see Radwán and 'Abdu'lláh first.'

The two looked at each other. 'Conscience makes cowards of us all', and had they dared they would have refused to go upstairs. But they assured their faltering hearts that it was absolutely certain nothing was known.

They entered the sick-room. There are few things in life so overpowering and heart-rending as the change which disease or accident makes in the face of one well known to us. 'Those pinched features', we say, 'that wan face—it is impossible that they belong to him who but

yesterday (it seems) was rejoicing in the strength and beauty of youth!'

So it proved on this occasion. When the two caught sight of that motionless form, the eyes closed in apparent apathy, the hands listlessly spread on the bed-clothes, the breathing hardly audible or visible, it was as though a stab went home to the heart of each. Good God! was this their handiwork! All their theories vanished; all the sanctions which had seemed to them to justify violent measures against an apostate were now forgotten. This wreckage, which their own hands had produced, itself confuted them and argued their wisdom down. They knew him, apostasy or no apostasy, to be a better man than themselves, nearer to God, more valuable to man.

For a minute they stood agitated, Touma lying yet motionless. Then he opened his eyes. 'Is the door closed?' he said. 'Abdu'llah went and shut it.

'Come very near', he said, 'for I have not strength to speak loud.' They drew near. To hear the faint voice they had to stoop down, kneeling on one knee on either side of the couch. Then Touma said, in a tone without bitterness, but of deep sorrow, very quietly: 'Oh, 'Abdu'lláh, Radwán, how could you treat me thus!'

The two men were utterly taken aback and deprived of speech, so entirely unexpected was the thrust, so unprepared were they to receive it.

The very lies that rose easily enough to the lips seemed, in that atmosphere, absurd, unconvincing. They could not even pitch the tone aright. Should the denial be with indignation, or anger, or abuse, or calm dignity, or surprise, or what?

They managed to get out some words signifying denial, and Radwán was beginning to enlarge upon the absurdity of the idea, but Touma raised his hand feebly, saying, 'Nay, I have no strength to listen. My minutes may be numbered. 'Abdu'lláh, look at your watch-chain.'

The Shaikh looked. He had not even noticed till that moment that a small pendant was gone from the chain.

'Radwán', said Touma again, 'is there a tassel gone from your gibba?

'What has that to do with you', growled the other. Nevertheless, he found himself compelled to look. It was as Touma said.

'Look here', said Touma, and took tassel and pendant from beneath the coverlet.

A thrill as from a strong galvanic battery ran through each of the two men, paralysing, numbing. There was no need for words. All was plain. 'Forgive us', was all they could falter out in broken tones.

'Listen', said Touma, 'for my words must be few. Ghali knows of these things, but not of their owners. His lips are sealed with a promise for the present. The authorities do not

know of this clue. You know what it would mean if they found it. You know the circumstances of your violent act. You know how many could witness to threats uttered publicly by you. You know the law, if this should end fatally, as I know it will.'

'Spare us', they groaned. 'We know not what we did.'

'O God!' said Touma—'An omen! Did He not say these very words of His persecutors! Give me of His Spirit! Dear friends, I desire not your death, but your life. I want to win, not destroy, your souls. I am dying. But by the Christ who died for my sins, I forgive you, if only I might point you to Him. Death worketh in me, but in you, life. I want the fruit of His death and my death to be your life!'

The young men were utterly broken down. Great sobs shook their frames, and they clutched convulsively at the coverlet of the bed.

'The truth is with you', sobbed Radwán, 'the truth is with you, and with your religion which works thus in you.'

'Won't you follow me? Only believe, and thou shalt be saved.'

'Everything is dark. Yet how can I disbelieve now that Christ died as you say He did.'

'Hold to that and all will follow. He died not only for me, but for you and 'Abdu'lláh. Won't you follow Him?'

'I will', said Radwán. 'Abdu'lláh was silent.

'You, too, 'Abdu'lláh', whispered Touma.

'Abdu'lláh only uttered a groan.

A knock was heard. Touma closed his hand over the tassel and pendant. Ghali entered and said: 'It is the officer from the parquet, he insists on seeing you one instant.' Then he withdrew.

Swiftly Touma opened his hand and gave the tassel to Radwán, the pendant to 'Abdu'lláh. 'Quick, take them', he said. An instant after the officer entered.

'I need only ask one question. I have taken Ghali Effendi's evidence, which, he says, he took from you. I will read it to you.' He read it. 'Have you anything to add?'

'Nothing.'

The officer wrote down this answer and withdrew.

'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,' whispered Touma. He lay still, his eyes closed. A spasm of pain suddenly passed over him. A strange change came over his face. Radwán sprang to his feet. 'Ghali', he cried, 'come'. He came, but Touma was unconscious. The internal trouble had recurred. The doctor was sent for in all haste. Radwán and 'Abdu'lláh slipped away, saluting the others, their faces wet with tears. While they waited the others stood reverently round the bed. They felt his life was slipping away.

'We can do nothing', said al-Hindi. 'But this life is not going to pass away without result, without fruit. Over this unconscious body I declare that from this day I will declare my faith in Jesus Christ and live for Him alone.'

'I surrender', said Ḥusain; 'I have fought long enough. But what shall I profit if I gain the whole world, and by being untrue to myself lose myself. I am Christ's.'

'And I', said 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ, 'if he who denied Him thrice was received, there may be hope for me.'

A silence followed.

Then Hanna poured forth a prayer, commending to God that soul there passing through the waters, and the souls which should form his crown. He prayed thus: '"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit". Glory be to Thee who first showed forth this law by word and act, and hast inspired this one here, by that law, to live and die. To Thee be glory for ever and ever.'

It was believed by them all, afterwards, that Touma passed away during the prayer. The doctor arriving just after found that he no longer lived.

Al-Hindi, Ḥusain, and Radwán, were baptized on one day; on which same day 'Abdu'l-Fattáḥ was received back into the Christian congrega-

tion. But 'Abdu'lláh left Cairo without a word. The rest of the friends joined together to raise a small monument over the place where they laid Touma. It was a cross, and on it the words:—

'So THEN DEATH WORKETH IN ME,
BUT IN YOU LIFE.'

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

B51A
41583

A8785

BP
166.2
G3

Gairdner, William Henry Temple, 1873-1928.
The Muslim idea of God. London, Christi
Literature Society [1909]
69p. 19cm. (Islam series [no.7])

1. God (Islam) I. Title. II. Series: I
series, no. 7.

CCSC/eh

A8785